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Characterization of injuries suffered by non-mounted and mounted police officers

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Background and aims

Policing can be a physically demanding occupation. Mounted police officers can be subject to unique physically demanding tasks, including horse mounted patrols and duties associated with caring for their mounts.

Differences in their occupational duties and physical tasks, compared to non-mounted police units, may lead them to present with injuries unique to this sub-group of police officers

The aim of this research was to describe policing injuries and identify differences in injury characteristics suffered by non-mounted and mounted police officers

Methods

- Data from 01 July 2014 to 31 June 2019, were provided from a State policing agency's incident reporting database.
- The data reported the number and rate of injuries and classified the injuries by gender, cause, mechanism, nature, and hours worked.
- Ethics approval was provided by Bond University Human Research Ethics Committee (BS02126).

Mounted police officer injury incidence rates are more than **2x** that of unmounted police

Mounted police officer injury causes and mechanisms differ to those of unmounted officers leading to different anatomical sites of injury



Results

A total of 35,305 injuries were reported.

Incidence Rate (per officer/year):

- Non-mounted = 35.20
- Mounted = 74.12

Leading causes of Injury (% of injuries):

- Non-mounted: Physical assault (21%)
- Mounted unit: Other/unspecified (33%) followed by Slips/trips/falls (24%).

Leading mechanisms of Injury (% of injuries):

- Non-mounted: Physical assault (20.95%)
- Mounted unit: Other/unspecified (25%) followed by falls from height (16%).

Natures of Injury (% of injuries):

- Non-mounted: Sprains/strains and bruises (37%) and bruises/swelling (21%)
- Mounted unit: Sprains/strains (44%) and bruises/ swelling (29%)

Site of Injury: (% of injuries)

- Non-mounted: Knee (14%), lower back (10%), hand (8%)
- Mounted unit: Lower back (14%), neck (7%), shoulder (7%)

Time of Injury: (% of injuries)

- Non-mounted: 8-12.5 hours into shift (35%)
- Mounted unit: <4 hours into shift (41%).

Conclusion and implications

Mounted police officers, while suffering similar natures of injuries to non-mounted officers, sustain their injuries by different causes and mechanisms.

Mounted police warrant unique injury mitigation and return-to-work strategies as their causes and mechanisms of injuries differ from their non-mounted counterparts.

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